

Recycling Improvement Fund Application Assessment Panel Terms of Reference

Purpose

As part of the agreed governance and application processes developed for the Recycling Improvement Fund, Zero Waste Scotland will convene a regular Application Assessment Panel to moderate assessments and agree final scores according to agreed criteria. Prior to the Application Assessment Panels, a minimum of three experienced and appropriately skilled assessors will have separately received the Applications and scored them against the agreed criteria. The outcome of these assessment panels will form the basis of recommendations made to the Recycling Improvement Fund Board, comprising representatives from:

- Scottish Government
- SOLACE
- COSLA
- Zero Waste Scotland
- SEPA

The assessment process has been designed to take account of the aims and objectives of the fund, which include ensuring impact and return on investments made.

The structure and processes of the Application Assessment Panel have been designed to ensure transparency of process, fairness of assessment, and accountability of all engaged with the fund; and will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure alignment with these principles.

The Panel

The Application Assessment Panel will comprise a minimum of three Zero Waste Scotland staff who are not connected to, or involved in, the application in question in any way.

Assessors will include subject matter experts and colleagues with experience in the following:

- Local authority recycling services;
- Resource management in a local authority context;
- Communications; and/or
- Grant management.

Each panel will comprise, as a minimum:

- A Panel Chair to guide discussions and populate a table to record changes to scores made during discussions, the consensus scores, and comments;
- Three additional Zero Waste Scotland colleagues to act as assessors;
- At least one member of the Zero Waste Scotland Procurement & Grants Team who will be responsible for providing a full set of minutes for the panel discussion;
- Input from Zero Waste Scotland communications experts to advise on adequacy of accompanying communications, dependent upon the project type and scope;
- Input from Zero Waste Scotland Procurement and Grants Team, Finance Team, and UMi, who will review applications in advance of the Panel meeting to advise on additionality, potential subsidy issues, financial assessment, and return on investment.

As necessary the Panel will be augmented by independent or specialist assessors where the scale or complexity of received applications makes this desirable. In particular, it is anticipated that the following experts will be called upon to advise on scoring against relevant assessment criteria:

- An Environmental Analyst or suitably trained colleague to review the ‘Impact and Transformation’ criterion of each application based on the projected carbon savings as calculated using the Zero Waste Scotland Carbon Metric.
- Where appropriate, technical specialists with knowledge specific to the application e.g. an organics expert to advise on food waste infrastructure projects.

Any declarations of conflicts of interest not previously highlighted and addressed pre-assessment shall be captured as part of the panel discussion, and the Procurement & Grants Team will advise on how best to proceed in a particular instance. Confirmation of non-collusion will be sought at the start of each Panel meeting.

A list of Board Meeting dates and the corresponding final submission dates to be considered at each will be published on the Zero Waste Scotland website and communicated to local authorities. Panel meetings will be scheduled to ensure that assessment of all applications received by the deadline is completed in time to be considered at the next Board meeting. Those received beyond the cut-off will be assessed in time for consideration at the subsequent Board meeting.

Assessment Process & Criteria

The purpose of the Assessment Panel is to assess each application independently and to score it against the criteria listed below using a pro-forma scoring matrix. The Panel meets to moderate the scores and reach consensus scores against each criterion. The outcome of each Panel shall be a recommendation to the RIF Board based on the application’s performance against the criteria.

CRITERIA	WEIGHTING
Evidence Led - The proposed project is based on the best industry and sectoral knowledge; recognised good practice; and addresses a demonstrated gap or improvement need.	27.5%
Impact & Transformation - The proposed project will support significant shifts in performance locally, regionally, or nationally in terms of recycling performance, waste prevention or reuse. The proposed project is focused on high carbon impacts through increasing the capture of priority materials such as food waste, garden waste, plastics and textiles, and the adoption of new and low carbon technologies.	22.5%
Strategic & Collaborative - The project shows alignment with current and future policy developments and local, regional or national priorities. The project also considers any broader impacts. The project adopts a partnership approach in developing and delivering projects across key stakeholders and/or across multiple authorities - where opportunity allows.	20%
Feasibility - The project is deliverable and well planned; the application demonstrates due diligence, planning, strong project management and targeted communication of infrastructure changes; it is also practicable within the timeframes.	20%
Additionality - The proposed project is one which, for reasons of scale, timing, or perceived risk, may not otherwise be progressed or would take significantly longer without grant funding.	5%
Acceptability - The project fits within the regulatory and planning frameworks, is acceptable to both local decision-makers and stakeholders and aligns with the scope of the fund.	5%

Applications will be circulated to assessors by a Zero Waste Scotland Procurement & Grants Officer (or other designated support) in advance of the Panel meeting, allowing assessors sufficient time to review and score each application in detail. A copy of each application will be sent to a member of the Communications Team and a Procurement & Grants expert to provide a specialist assessment of the Communications Plan and financial elements respectively.

Each assessor will score independently and save individual assessments in a location that cannot be accessed by their fellow assessors. Individual scoring matrices will be returned to the relevant Grants Officer and recorded ahead of the Panel.

During the Panel moderation meeting, each assessor will present their thoughts and initial scoring. All scores will be discussed, whether or not they are outliers, to ensure that they are an accurate reflection of the response required within the application. Issues, challenges, or areas for clarification shall be discussed until a consensus score is reached for each criterion.

In the event that any individual assessor wishes to amend their original scores, this shall be captured in the minutes and both the individual and group scoring matrices. The change to the score will be set out clearly alongside the justification provided by the assessor.

A single combined overall score will be recorded in an internal tracker. A copy of the minutes and the combined and individual scoring matrices, including the agreed funding recommendation, will be saved in a secure internal shared space.

Scoring

Each assessor will be provided ahead of time with a copy of the scoring matrix as well as guidance to ensure that scoring is consistent and fair.

Any queries which arise in relation to applications (for example, lack of supporting documentation) during the scoring process should be highlighted in the first instance to the Procurement & Grants representative who will advise of how to proceed. If a clarification is required ahead of the Assessment Panel, this will be issued directly to the applicant, with a deadline for responses provided to the applicant to allow assessment to proceed in a timely manner.

Any queries, clarifications or requests for further information which arise during the Assessment Panel discussion will be issued directly to the applicant with a deadline for responses to be provided. Responses shall be sent to a member of the Procurement & Grants team and then subsequently circulated to the Panel. For minor queries, the decision may be settled by correspondence; for significant queries a special Panel may be convened to discuss the response and reach a conclusion.

Each application shall be scored individually against the criteria and on its own merits rather than competitively with other applications. Final recommendations will take into account: the consensus scores against each of the criteria; the assessments provided by the Communications team and Procurement & Grants team; and the Return on Investment Assessment included within the Assessment Matrix.

Outcome

In all cases the outcomes of each assessment will be one of the following:

- a recommendation to approve the full funding request;
- a recommendation to approve partial funding of the request;

- a recommendation to decline the funding request; or
- to seek clarification before making the final recommendation.

Following each Assessment Panel, a summary of funding recommendations will be prepared for presentation at the next RIF Board meeting for their decision. Once decisions have been made by the Board and ratified by the Minister, an outcome letter is issued to the local authority applicant. All outcome letters should be issued within three weeks of the Board meeting at which they were considered.

Following a decision to fund, Zero Waste Scotland will agree a management process as part of the formal agreement with the local authority to ensure projects are kept in scope and on track

